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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 64th MEETING

Chairman: Mrs. EMERSON (Portugal)
(Vice-Chairman)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

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In the absence of the Chairman, Mrs. Emerson (Portugal), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.30 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 121: REVIEW OF THE EFFICIENCY OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL FUNCTIONING OF THE UNITED NATIONS (continued) (A/48/801 and General Assembly resolution 48/218)

1. Mr. MADDENS (Belgium), reporting on the results of the informal consultations, said that no consensus had been reached as yet on the item.

2. Mrs. GRAHAM (United States of America) suggested that the Committee should make time available for the consultations to continue during the current week.

3. Mrs. RODRÍGUEZ (Cuba) supported by Mr. GOKHALE (India) said that it would be better for the Committee to conclude its discussions of those topics it had already begun.

4. Mr. DAMICO (Brazil) suggested that the Committee could decide on the scheduling of the next informal consultations when it took up its consideration of the programme of work.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

5. Mr. STITT (United Kingdom), noting that the financing of individual peace-keeping missions would have to be dealt with as the necessity emerged, said that the Committee should carry out a prioritization exercise. The issues to which his delegation attached the highest urgency included the United Nations telecommunications system (A/C.5/48/11 and Add.1) and the integrated management information system project (IMIS) (A/C.5/48/12), under agenda item 123; and the report of the Secretary-General on criteria to ensure transparency in the use of the support account and the regular budget for the backstopping of peace-keeping operations (resolution 48/226 B of 5 April 1994) and the document on effective planning, presentation and administration of peace-keeping operations, under agenda item 138.

6. Mr. STÖCKL (Germany) agreed that the Committee should try to establish an order of priorities and that the issue of the support account was one item that needed to be taken up as a matter of urgency. He was surprised to see that the Secretariat had failed, once again, to prepare the list of staff of the United Nations Secretariat. It should be informed that the Committee would not discuss anything related to personnel questions until that list was produced.

7. Mr. BOIN (France) endorsed the statements made by the representatives of the United Kingdom and Germany, particularly the latter's final comment. Regarding agenda item 124, he wondered whether the Chairman of the Advisory Committee could explain why that Committee's reports were not available.

(Mr. Boin, France)

8. His delegation attached high priority to item 138, and he wished to know why the report regarding transparency in the use of the support account and the document on effective planning of peace-keeping operations had still not been issued.

9. The report of the Secretary-General on the issue of workload justification in the Centre for Human Rights (resolution 48/228, para. 59) and workload standards for conference-servicing staff (A/C.5/47/67) should be added to the list of priorities under agenda item 123. His delegation was not satisfied with the conference services situation and would appreciate some clarification from the secretariat as to why other conferences were apparently given priority over the Fifth Committee.

10. Mr. MERIFIELD (Canada) wondered when the first of the quarterly reports for 1994 provided for under paragraph 10 of resolution 48/228 would be ready, adding that his delegation would appreciate a report on the status of the integration of OPS/UNDP in the Department for Development, Support and Management Services. Under agenda item 123, the documents relating to personnel - Department of Administration and Management senior structure, proposals of the Secretary-General on distribution of responsibilities and resources regarding energy and natural resources and the report of the Secretary-General on justification of reclassification of posts in the Professional categories and above - involved questions of principle and he would appreciate information on their status. The proposals of the Secretary-General on the provisions of and related arrangements for travel services and allowances (resolution 48/228, para. 27), should be taken up early, as should, under agenda item 120, the implementation of recommendations of the Board of Auditors (A/48/516 and Add.1). He agreed with other speakers about the importance of dealing with some of the peace-keeping items.

11. Mr. SHARP (Australia) said that his delegation agreed that telecommunications and IMIS should be among the priorities, along with peace-keeping operations and human rights. It would also be important to consider the adequacy of conference servicing. He agreed with the representative of Canada on the need for the financial report for the first quarter of 1994. Another item not to be postponed was the report entitled "Recovery of misappropriated funds" (A/48/572).

12. Mr. GOUDYMA (Ukraine) said that his delegation attached very high priority under item 138, to the review of the rates of reimbursement to the Governments of troop-contributing States (A/48/912) and the report of the open-ended working group to examine the placement of Member States in the groups for the apportionment of peace-keeping expenses.

13. Mr. JU Kuilin (China), referring to item 123, said that the integration of OPS/UNDP into the Department for Development Support and Management Services should receive priority consideration, as should the report of the Secretary-General on the creation of a new budget section relating to the New Agenda for Development in Africa (resolution 48/228, para. 27). Peace-keeping operations should, of course, continue to receive priority.

14. Ms. ERIKSSON-FOGH (Sweden), recalling that a decision had been taken to hold a substantive discussion on agenda item 124, inquired about the rationale behind the proposal to defer it.

15. Mr. ELZIMAITY (Egypt) said that his delegation would prefer to give priority to the consideration of agenda item 124.

16. Mr. GOKHALE (India), supported by Ms. PEÑA (Mexico) agreed that agenda item 124 was very important, but that it should be discussed only when the relevant Advisory Committee reports were available. He inquired whether they would be ready for the resumed session in June.

17. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman, Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), replying to the representative of France, recalled that, in 1993, the Advisory Committee had decided not to issue reports on all the topics under agenda item 124. However, if the Committee were to decide to take up that item in June, the Advisory Committee should be able to indicate whether the reports would be issued.

18. He agreed with the representative of the United Kingdom that consideration of telecommunications, IMIS and the support account could not be postponed. The support account was of particular importance because the Secretary-General had resources available only through 30 June.

19. He pointed out that the June session would not be long enough to deal even with the priority items and several peace-keeping operations would have to be considered during July. The Fifth Committee must decide as soon as possible, which items should be postponed to the forty-ninth session, and make its recommendation to the General Assembly accordingly. If the Committee was unable to make a decision until June, the Advisory Committee would prepare only those reports concerning items that could not be postponed, such as telecommunications, IMIS, and support costs.

20. Mr. TAKASU (Controller) said that arrangements regarding the integration of OPS/UNDP into the Department for Development Support and Management Services were in the process of being defined and would be submitted to the forthcoming meeting of the UNDP Executive Board. Regarding the telecommunications system, the Secretariat was providing additional information to the Advisory Committee. Approval of the plan would result in significant economies in peace-keeping operations and the regular budget.

21. A number of matters pertaining to restructuring of the Secretariat, including the senior structure of the Department of Administration and Management and decentralization of responsibilities and resources regarding energy and natural resources remained outstanding. No action could be taken on the reclassification of posts in the Professional categories and above without General Assembly approval. Finally, in response to the question from the representative of Canada, he said that since figures from overseas had not yet been received, the Secretariat was not yet in a position to provide the quarterly report.

(Mr. Takasu)

22. Turning to agenda item 138, he explained that the delay in presenting the Secretary-General's report on criteria to ensure transparency in the use of the support account was due to the scope and complexity of the work involved. However, everything possible was being done to complete the report as soon as possible.

23. Responding to the question put by the German delegation concerning the list of staff, he said that the Secretariat would prepare a list in the format that was most feasible in the current circumstances. It would be comprehensive and would provide a good basis for discussions.

24. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman, Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the Advisory Committee proposed to report to the UNDP Executive Board meeting to be held on 10 May 1994. If completed, the report would be made available to the meeting of the Executive Board to be held in Geneva in June.

25. Mrs. RODRÍGUEZ (Cuba) said that her Government attached great importance to agenda item 121 and would prefer its consideration to be deferred to a later date.

26. The CHAIRMAN said that that request would be taken into account when preparing the Committee's programme of work.

The meeting was suspended at 5 p.m. and resumed at 5.15 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 123: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1994-1995 (continued)

Draft resolution A/C.5/48/L.64

27. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee had failed to achieve consensus on part B of draft resolution A/C.5/48/L.64. It could not be introduced.

28. Mr. STITT (United Kingdom) expressed surprise since he believed that the text, although imperfect, had been agreed upon during informal discussions.

29. Mrs. GRAHAM (United States of America) reiterated her delegation's understanding that the compensation of the members of the International Court of Justice would remain at the level established in 1990.

30. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman, Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that, as the International Court of Justice was one of the principal organs of the United Nations, it was not appropriate to keep postponing the item. Some elements of the draft resolution had already been agreed upon and discussions should continue on those elements on which agreement had not yet been reached.

31. Mr. STITT (United Kingdom) said that his delegation took it that the item remained open and that in the absence of consensus, any delegation might propose another text.

32. Ms. SHENWICK (United States of America) said that her Government's position on the matter was well known: it placed emphasis on channelling scarce resources into programmes for the economic and social development of Member States and into arrangements for the maintenance of international peace and security. It was her understanding that paragraph 3 of the draft resolution before the Committee had not been agreed upon in informal discussions and had, in fact, been inserted after the informal meetings.

33. The fact that her delegation did not agree to a change in the current pension plan should in no way be construed as disrespect for a principal organ of the Organization, for the judicial process or indeed for the legal profession. It simply meant that her delegation believed that the current compensation package was adequate and that the pension component was sufficient to ensure that retired judges enjoyed an appropriate lifestyle. She did not agree that the matter should be kept open.

34. The CHAIRMAN suggested that, since at least one delegation had expressed a wish to keep the item under consideration, more time should be given to delegations to try to reach a consensus.

35. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 5.35 p.m.